



Comparative Cultures

The Greatest Show On Earth?

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

If Oprah said India is her greatest life experience, it must be true. It always is, no matter how many times you leave or how frequently you return.

Her trip must have been quite different from mine, because I didn't receive standing ovations or get interviewed by every Indian news publication every day. But she stayed for a mere fifteen days, and I was here for close to five months, so that should count for something.

Besides, the Big O herself said that you can't see India in two weeks, because it's the greatest show on Earth. I'm not sure if I would use that exact phrase for a motley crowd of a billion people just living their lives. But then, it was Oprah who was invited to speak at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2012 and not me, so the case rests there.

I agree with her when she said that her first impression of India was one of chaos, which she then noticed had an underlying calm or flow. But she added that there seemed to be a "method to the madness" in India.

Again, I wonder how we define madness,

even if it is used loosely as in this context. It must be, as she described, the men riding donkeys and women in saris wearing helmets. Or cars running red lights and oxen drawing carts laden with steel. Or, some may think, a financial crisis that left half its population jobless or on the brink of it.

I grew up in an India that was an increasingly popular destination for Hollywood celebrities, and spent a few years as a journalist who saw closely the Indian obsession with them. Every publication went dizzy reporting and repeating their quotes and impressions of India, its people, its values. They either glorified it or criticized it, like a book open for review even by those that are barely literate.

I thought a talk show host like Oprah would be different, but hardly. But there must be something about the world's largest democracy that allows so many viewpoints, and many more opinions.

Kinjal Dagli-Shah is a long-time Oprah fan but also a discerning journalist and world citizen, or so she likes to think. Write to her at kinjal.dagli@gmail.com.

Mayor Gets Behind Skateboard Park

A visit to a council meeting by a young skateboarding enthusiast caught the attention of Mayor Wayne Emmerson.

"Max took the initiative to come to council and ask Whitchurch-Stouffville to build a skate park for all one where skateboarders that are just beginning can come and practise, but also watch and learn from the older, more seasoned boarders - a place where boarders of all levels feel welcome and at home," said the mayor.

"He made me realize that what the youth want, and need, is a place they can make their own. I fully support youth initiatives such as that, so I am making it my mandate to raise funds through various activities to assist the youth to make sure we get this done, and get it

done right." Fundraising efforts will get off the ground with a dinner at Sleepy Hollow Golf & Country Club on April 12, with TSN Radio host Mike Richards acting as Master of Ceremonies.

"My goal is to personally raise \$100,000 to put toward the cost of building a great park that all can enjoy, that is ideally located, and that is constructed so that it can be expanded over the next few years," said Mayor Emmerson. "I encourage residents, businesses and associations to 'get on board' and assist in the efforts."

For tickets and information on the event, or to learn about sponsorship opportunities, contact Tamara.Carlson@townofws.ca or call 905-640-1910 ext. 2227.



Mayor Wayne Emmerson with Max James, who came to a council meeting to seek support for a new skateboard park. The mayor has pledged to raise \$100,000 towards the cost of the park.

Dave Mills stouffville.com photo

thank you

For making 2011 such an inspiring year!

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